

PROCMURA PRICA

A Quarterly Newsletter of the Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa

The need for structural approach in Christian-Muslim relations work appreciated in Madagascar

THE reality on the need for proactive mechanisms in Christian-Muslim relations was reiterated by leadership of the Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA) and *Communauté d'Eglise en Mission/Community of Churches in Mission* (CEVAA) when they convened a joint

based communal activities focussing on building and sustaining harmonious relations.

Standing on the ground that Christianity and Islam are both missionary religions and hence respective adherents would be making efforts to bring people to their own faiths (Christians through evangelisation and Muslims through da'wa), having no structural organisation to enhance respectful approach is a recipe for confrontation. This was observed by PROCMURA's General Adviser, Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah who represented the organisation at the meeting accompanied by the Women and Education Programme Coordinator, Rev. Mrs. Angèle Dogbé.



Participants to the Zanzibar meeting including Rev. Dr. Jean-Claude Basset (second from left) and Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah (centre, seated)

working session in Madagascar's town of Majunga, located in the Northwest part of the country. This had a main agenda to initiate and support grassroots'

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In providing the brief to the Literature and Communications Officer upon their return, Rev. Mrs. Dogbé said that one of the most surprising concepts articulated in this island whose population is slightly over nineteen (19) million is what is called *Fiavana Concept*. "This is a cultural concept that spells out norms and ground living rules in the community to maintain harmony," she said. She added that the process works in such a way that even if injustices are committed, the victim of such injustice is urged to endure (avoid revenging) and pursue peaceful means of finding solutions.

On the area of propagation of faith by respective faith communities, it was underlined that since the global and continental dynamics around the relations between Christians and Muslims easily affect the local situations, there is a dire need to have a structure that would target bringing adherents of the two faiths together for the purpose of talking and working for peace. "The issue is not whether or not the two faiths should be propagated by their adherents but rather the question that must be addressed is 'how do we do it in an interfaith environment without provoking the other'," the session observed. The February 6 – 15, 2008 event, bringing together Christian men and women, both lay and clergy addressed pertinent issues on the matter of enhancing good relations between Christians and Muslims, saw participants acknowledging the middle way approach by PROCMURA.

In leading the sessions were Rev. Dr. Jean-Claude Basset, Rev. Dr. Samuel Johnson and Mrs. Karen Thomas all from CEVAA while from PROCMURA were Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah and Rev. Mrs. Angèle Dogbé. Speaker after speaker, while contributing to the situation in the country, acknowledged the peaceful coexistence between and amongst people of different faiths but at the same time

making a passionate appeal to have a relational structure. "It is our understanding that the only way to ensure that the current peaceful working environment is maintained is to have a process through which the two communities could further their daily interactions," Rev. Jean-Claude Basset

...our understanding is that the only way to ensure that the current peaceful working environment is maintained is to have a process through which the two communities could further their daily interactions...

commented. On her part and especially from the women's point of view, Rev. Mrs. Dogbé said that the women, who managed to have sometime off to brainstorm separately, were delighted that in spite of the existing differences, they have never had difficulties working together on the basis that they face common problems. "In this case, it is of great importance to note that the zeal with which these women collaborate can be enhanced through a practical working structure," Angèle said.

Other matters that took centre stage of the workshop included the role of religious leaders in the process of regional integration which was facilitated by an expert in that area. At the end of what came to be seen as a busy working session under the leadership of the two organisations, some strategic key areas were found to be mutually acceptable. One of these was to work around the area of building a PROCMURA Area committee on Christian-Muslim relations

to push the agenda for peaceful engagement as well as to be part of the PROCMURA expansion programme into the Southern Africa region.

The expansion programme was initiated by PROCMURA and CEVAA through a joint meeting which took place in Morija, in the mountain Kingdom of Lesotho in February 2004. The purpose of that inaugural seminar, which was deliberated at the Madagascar event, was to open up more space for PROCMURA activities to commence in earnest by providing the necessary information to Church leaders who, hitherto the gathering, were not conversant



A participant giving his view during one of the plenary sessions in the PROCMURA-CEVAA consultation in Madagascar

with the PROCMURA and its approach. Just like the Morija event, the Majunga resolution affirmed the need for effective responsible and respectful witness. Participants affirmed their commitment to work together with PROCMURA in enhancing constructive engagement between Christians and Muslims in the country. The churches' representatives, in addition to appreciating the need for working together, said that they will avail their resources towards sustaining the Area Committees' work when it is formed.

Some sharing on the grassroots project (Project Shalom) being undertaken in the country was done and the outcome is covered elsewhere in this newsletter.



The Contrast between What Gadaffi said about the Bible, and what 138 Muslims Say about Christian-Muslim Relations: A reflection by the General Adviser

FOR the last few months PROCMURA's Central Office has been inundated with enquiries on two issues of which one was prominent and the other latent.

The prominent subject of enquiry was on the Libyan leader Colonel Muammar Gadaffi's statement (captured later in this paper) in Uganda that the Bible Christians have today is not the true Bible because it does not mention or refer to the coming of Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam.

In contrast with Gadaffi's statement were enquiries on a document signed by 138 Muslim leaders around the world to Christian leaders and Christians worldwide entitled "A Common Word between US and YOU". "A Common Word" is a call to Christians and Muslims to work together for peace in the world.

The contrast between those who made enquiries on Gadaffi's statement and those who enquired about 'A Common Word' was very clear.

Some of those who made enquiries on Gadaffi's statement felt that there was a need for a measured response from the Christian community in Uganda to dispel any confusion the said statement would have created. Most of who enquired, however, said that Gadaffi and his statement needed to be ignored, arguing that it is his trademark anywhere he goes and where Christians are the majority in an African country. Some of Christians who felt very much offended raised questions with PROCMURA on whether if President Museveni of Uganda had made similar statements on the Qur'an in Libya, it would have been taken kindly.

In order not to labour on what happened, the important thing is that the Christian leadership in Uganda called on their members to take notice of what was said but do not get engaged in any negative reaction. They appealed for calm and urged the Christian community to continue to live with their Muslim

brothers and sisters in peace as they have always done. Some of the Christian leaders had to dig deep into Christian apologetics to assure the faithful that the Bible



**Rev. Dr. J. Mbillah, PROCMURA
General Adviser**

is the word of God and that nothing had changed from the original text as Gadaffi has sought to put across.

Some Muslims who contacted PROCMURA in regard to 'A Common Word', sought to know whether PROCMURA would be commenting on it or asking the Churches to download the document and see the goodwill of the Muslim community towards Christians. Some other Muslims, however, felt that the document was not representative enough since fewer Muslims in Africa had signed it, and hoped that other Muslims would join in signing it. Some Christians who contacted the office, on their part, saw the document as providing the way forward for Christians and Muslims to peacefully coexist and exercise pro-existence (standing for each other). Others who over analysed the document felt that there was too much theological newspeak in it that needed further unravelling if the document has to be appreciated by all.

To briefly comment on the two issues, it has to be said that PROCMURA was deeply concerned when Gadaffi questioned the authenticity of the Bible. Our concern was not because we felt that it will make the Bible any less than the word of God that it is, but because of any antagonism that the statement would stimulate between Christians and Muslims in Uganda, and the East Africa sub-region.

We thank God that Christians and Muslims continue to live in peace in spite of negative religious influences from the outside world that seek to turn citizens and people of different faiths, especially Christians and Muslims, against each other.

On 'A Common Word', which over eight (8) Muslims from Sub-Saharan Africa (mostly from Nigeria) and over thirty (30) Muslims in the entire continent signed up to, we encourage all those who are interested in Christian-Muslim relations to read the document and where possible study it.

In order to create curiosity for those who will want to ignore it and stimulate them to look at it, 'A Common Word' acknowledges that Muslims and Christians together constitute over half of the world's population and argues that if adherents of the two faiths are not at peace with each other, there will be no meaningful peace in the world. It sees the bonding of Christians and Muslims as that of the Love of God and the Love of neighbour which the document argues as grounded in scriptures and traditions of the two faiths. It has a lot of theological reflections in it which need a discerning mind to ascertain what the document actually seeks to put across.

To access the document please go to: www.acommonword.com

**Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah
PROCMURA GENERAL ADVISER**

Upendo (Love) Diapraxis Project takes off in Zanzibar

If you walk in the narrow alleys of the old Stone Town in Zanzibar, you may come across a sign that says “Upendo Means Love”. Once inside, one will see a busy place where Muslim and Christian women work together as sisters. The atmosphere which greets the visitor is that of friendship and hard-work beyond identity differences. In fact, apart from the attire adorned by the women and possibly the names, one may not be able to know that these women have religious differences among and between them. This is the Upendo diapraxis project.

The project has two sections. Found upstairs is the sewing school which educates and trains the women and currently, the number of women trained per year stands at thirty-six (36). On the downstairs floor, women are seen busy making and sewing vibrant clothes in local textiles with an impressively high quality finish. On the same floor next door, the products of the hard-work is displayed and tourists mingle around trying to find what to take back home. It is a mood that embraces shock as to how people of different faiths could be involved in a

demonstrates a practical ideology of relationship building in this kind of multi-faith environment and I would urge those who are involved to keep up the spirit,” Mr. Tom McCullough, a tourist from Ireland commented. The messages adorned on the clothes and other materials are quite impressive and they all call for the need for peaceful living – Upendo means love

The project coordinator is Dorthe Davidsen Langås. Her husband, Rev. Arngeir Langås who is also a Danmission Missionary in Zanzibar, related the background of the project to the PROCMURA Literature and Communications Officer when he visited the centre together with other participants to the Zanzibar-Egyptian exchange programme which took place in Zanzibar recently. He says that Upendo is a reality and it is a story.

“The reality of Upendo is a lot of hard practical and strategic work to achieve common goals which include building common understanding between and amongst the Christian and Muslim women here in Zanzibar and through the sewing education and training, Upendo seeks to giving them sustainable life skills,” Rev. Langås, who helps at the project said. He added that the good clothes which are sold



***Dorthe Davidsen Langås,
the project coordinator***

make the project run well in all its workings and hence seeks to make the project self-sustainable. Commenting on the same, Mrs. Langås who took the participants around the project said that through the project, Christian and Muslim women have successfully and peacefully cooperated to work together. “This has enabled us to cultivate the culture of love between us and them and making us understand that despite our religious and cultural differences, we can still cooperate on issues of common concerns,” she said.

Turning his attention on how the project has been perceived by people both in and outside Zanzibar, Langås said that for many, this idea is new and radical adding that “at Upendo they see it as real and a possible venture and the products which include the clothes and environment of learning from and about each other testify that it is true”.

Talking to the women at the centre of the project and their impression confirm the testimony that the project has facilitated their ability to look beyond their differences and put them in the position of



All smiles: Students at Upendo diapraxis project showing their appreciation

common project and actually produce such gallant-looking and impressive products. “This is impressive and indeed



attending to their common problems. "We pray that the project reaches as many women both Christians and Muslims as possible," Ms. Mohammed, a sewer at the centre said. "Yes, we are different and often disagree on a number of issues, but we are also united: "united in a vision for a better world", as our postcard says," another participant who spoke on behalf of the rest said. A Christian woman on her part commented that "We all want all of us including our children to be happy and productive in our lives and this can only be achievable when we have peace in our relations".

Rev. Langås says that having and making Upendo run has never been easy and to this he applauds the Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA) for support in the form of advice.

...the project has enabled us to cultivate the culture of love between usmaking us understand that despite our religious and cultural differences, we can still cooperate on issues of common concerns...

advices on a number of strategic issues and we only hope that this collaboration shall continue," he told Mr. Okok, the organisation's Literature and Communications Officer. He said that he hopes that more people will be interested in the work of Upendo just as PROCMURA whose input inspires hope of love between Muslims and Christians.

For more information on the project, kindly visit: www.upendomeanslove.com



Some Egyptian delegates to the CEOSS-Zanzibar Exchange Programme admiring some of the products of Upendo diapraxis project during the visit to the centre. Rev. Arngeir Langås (second left) a Danmission missionary in Zanzibar, giving briefing

"PROCMURA, given its long historical knowledge on matters of Christian-Muslim relations in the continent, has been our foundational supporter in the area of giving us

PROCMURA Executive Committee meeting planned for Nairobi

Since being elected to office, the Executive Committee members of the Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA) will be meeting for the first time in Nairobi in mid 2008.

The 30th June – 3rd July 2008 constitutional gathering of PROCMURA's top leadership will be expected to take stock of the decisions arrived at the 2007 General Council which was held in Kaduna, Nigeria.

As is expected, the meeting will receive reports from the Central Office and Regional Staff with the purpose of using them in planning for the next agenda of the Organisation.

The PROCMURA Chairman, Bishop Josiah Fearon, who hosted the last General Council, has expressed hope that with the commitment that has been demonstrated by the members of the committee through interactive communication and suggestions he has been receiving from them, the meeting will be an energetic session in regard to the programmes of the organisation.



The PROCMURA Executive Committee members



Student body takes interfaith approach to peace building into campuses and say they have learnt a lot from PROCMURA

The Pan-African Coordinator of International Young Christian Students share her story of great lessons

PEOPLE in Africa, like other parts of the world, have and still do experience calamities including wars and conflicts. Unfortunately, some of these arise from, and bear the face of religion and hence more often have been termed 'religious conflicts'.

Students and young people have been instruments of conflicts and in most cases, find themselves fighting wars they hardly understand. Based on this and coupled with the understanding that religion, as much as is supposed to work well for human relations, has been misused as an instrument for conflicts. A student based ecumenical organisation initiated a process through which they intend to use the energies of students in campuses and to promote engagement between and among different faith communities.

The Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA) has accompanied the student body in the process and as Mary Wambui, the International Young Christian Students (IYCS) Pan-African team coordinator indicates, they have benefited and learnt a lot from the organisation and only looks forward to more interactions.

After carrying out various programmes across the continent, the coordinator shared her story with the PROCMURA Literature and Communications Officer, Mr. Okok-Obuoga and we do hereby publish the story in full. In her presentation, Ms. Wambui says that the YCS looks forward to more opportunities of working with PROCMURA.

Here is her story:

“In order to realise practical contribution by the students in, amongst others, identifying and addressing specific and hidden challenges, the pan-African Office of the International Young Christian Students (IYCS) initiated a very unique approach four years ago. Beginning at the regional levels, we as IYCS pan-African team, felt that a multi-faith student training session could help students enrich their skills and ability to respond, in a non-violent way, to challenges facing their society. We realised that this is vital not only to achieve peace but to sustain peaceful relationship as well. These were founded on the basis that 'where people from different faith communities live together as neighbours and co-citizens, dialogue should not be viewed merely as an activity of meetings and conferences but rather as an instrument for daily interactions and means of peaceful resolutions of differences'. In order to realise this, tools and skills are required especially on the mode of living the faith and striving to recognise and respect each other's aspirations.

As witnessed in the inaugural regional inter-religious workshops, students acknowledged that 'to understand each other, we need first to know ourselves and our identity and that of others with whom we daily interact and; identify, acknowledge and respect differences that may exist'. One student in the Nairobi session – the one for East Africa region – put it bluntly, 'we need to go beyond mere talks and put the lessons into practice within our campuses' lives'. From



Ms. Mary Wambui, the IYCS Pan-African Coordinator, "I see students benefiting greatly from the experience of PROCMURA in matters of peace and interfaith engagement in the continent"

East Africa, the event moved to West Africa – both for French and English speaking regions the former taking place in Burkina Faso while the latter being held in Accra, Ghana. From all these emerged the spirit for moving the dialogical encounters from the rooms of conferences to the societies where people live and operate.

To cloud the first phase of our training series, Msimbazi Catholic Centre in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania became the convergence place for more than forty (40) students from different faith traditions coming from a total of eight countries namely Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Ghana and Liberia. With high expectations from the workshop, they came to deliberate

on how they could shape, to the positive, human relations in the continent. Purposed to share experiences, offer training on dialogue and negotiation skills and exposure to various examples of successful interfaith relations, the five-day event managed to bring to the fore factors



for consideration when one is involved in inter-religious dialogue. The March 8 – 13, 2008 training session, just like others before, really benefited from PROCMURA's

Mr. Mohammed Mustafa Sandi, a Muslim delegate from Sierra Leone was all appreciative saying that free and honest interaction between and amongst people of faith is an engine to dropping the prejudices and stereotypes that engulf people's ability to live in peace.

Learning from each other became the cornerstone of the session as well as to deepen the inter-faith understanding. Mr. Samuel Ataribanan from Ghana and Miss. Umulkulthum Yeya, a Muslim and a student at Kenya's Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, could not hide their joy in seeing students jointly agreeing to undertake a distinctive way in building peace in the society.

My colleague in the office, Sylvia Adriansolo, whose term as the Pan-African Coordinator is coming to an end and who has successfully steered the process to

this level, was upbeat in seeing the kind of work that was done. In her parting short, she said, "The training and the whole process has offered me the opportunities for interaction and practical know-how of how to engage with persons who do not share my faith values". It would not have been easy without PROCMURA's contribution and in this, I do call upon all members of YCS to keep on learning from the organisation's long-term experience and make use of its expertise on the ground, she said.

At the end of the working session, all participants agreed that peaceful co-existence in a multi-faith society could only be realised and sustained when there is a reduction of fear and suspicion of each other which is only achievable when people accept to come together, open up to one another and see each other as human beings.

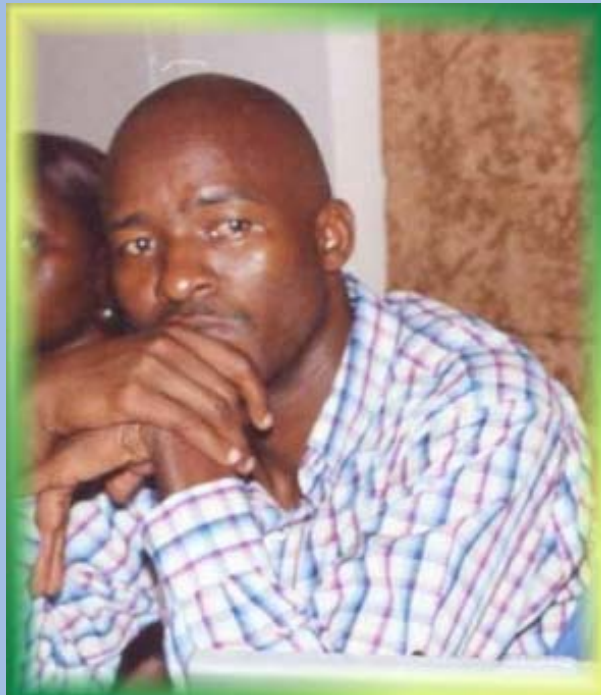
On this, a work plan was developed and following the relation that already exists with PROCMURA, all the country programmes enlisted the organisation as a key partner in the implementation.



A section of the YCS students at the Dar-es-Salaam workshop at one of the outdoor activities

contribution. The Area Adviser for PROCMURA in Tanzania, Rev. Canon Thomas Godda did not only facilitate a session but was also crucial in the mobilisation of participants especially those from non-Christian traditions. On the other hand, Mr. Okok, the Literature and Communications Officer at the organisation's Central Office in Nairobi, Kenya, who came as the official representatives of the organisation, in an impromptu way, helped in various ways.

The exposures and training sessions have provided what has been described by the Nigerian YCS National Coordinator, Michael Ejeh Adikwu as 'unprecedented opportunity and one which could be a true and grassroots-based channel to peace'. Our process has been modelled to ensure that what is planned is implemented at the national levels with the specific focal points at campuses and therefore when we come to the regional or continental event, we gauge and respond to the challenges being brought.



Okok-Obuoga of PROCMURA Central Office in one of the sessions



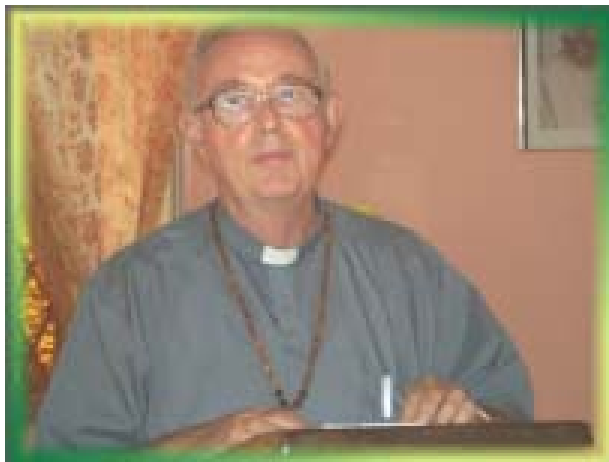
Anglophone West Africa Christian and Muslim women vow to work together to accomplish PROCMURA's work against HIV/AIDS

AMONG other problems posing great challenge to women in the continent is HIV/AIDS. Based on this realisation, the PROCMURA's Women's Programme carved a niche three years ago to combat the spread and effects of the pandemic through advocacy and joint capacity building sessions.

The sessions have been held at regional levels throughout the continent with interesting outcomes. With the purpose of, among others, shaping the attitudes and behavioural patterns of women in regard to the pandemic and formulating strategic actions to harmonise their efforts in curbing the virus, the women who have had opportunities of attending these events have all been appreciative with some of them saying that their lives have deeply changed. "This is not only on the way I have been thinking about the pandemic but also on how to relate to the person who does not share my faith values," Ms. Zubeda of Rwanda said after attending the Central Africa regional consultation held earlier.

The Anglophone West Africa women training session which took place on May 4 – 9, 2008 in Banjul, the Gambia, aimed at developing multiplying effects in curbing the virus in and among the participating countries.

Hosted by the Gambia Christian Council (GCC) and the PROCMURA Area Committee in the Gambia, the four-day session brought together twenty-seven Christian and Muslim women from Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria North and West, and the Gambia.



Archbishop Robert P. Ellison, the Catholic Bishop of Banjul. He opened the consultation and highlighted problems that still ravage the continent and called on religious leaders to support PROCMURA's initiatives of involving women in bringing sustainable solutions

In order to realise the objectives, a number of activities were lined up. These included thematic paper presentations relating to the pandemic, life experience sharing especially by those living with HIV, country analyses, and group and plenary discussions. These focused on enhancing the participants' capacities - both in theory and practice - to effectively and responsibly respond to the spread of HIV.

The consultation was officially opened by the Catholic Bishop of Banjul; Archbishop Robert P. Ellison who catalogued the ravaging problem in sub-Saharan Africa. These he mentioned as poverty, hunger, corruption and HIV/AIDS pandemic. "The continent could be in a better position to experience good living if the followers of the two religions namely, Christianity and Islam, could work together in



Participants to the Regional consultation here seen with Guests and some resource persons

addressing these vices,” he said. He challenged PROCMURA to take that as a task to ensure that Christians and Muslims in Africa understood each other and said that the only way of doing this is developing trust through working on common problems such as what women are addressing. “I urge all of you present here to take lessons you will get seriously and ensure that actions you have planned are implemented,” he said. He said the Catholic Church was committed to accompanying PROCMURA to achieve such laudable objectives. Bishop Ellison, in particular mentioned Pope Benedict XVI’s document for the Muslims and Christians to come together as one to fight a common cause which the Muslims accepted.

Participants, while giving their individual views on areas that should be urgent in the joint agenda in the fight against HIV/AIDS, talked of stigma both

at the level of infections and cultural norms. They also said that efforts of organisations such as PROCMURA in bringing women together to have a common voice should be encouraged and emulated by the religious leaders at the country levels. They vowed to concretise the follow-up strategies.

The Anglophone West Africa women representative to the PROCMURA Executive Committee, Ms. Annie Belle, who played a pivotal role in organising the consultation, told the participants that the only means by which such programmes could have practical beneficial effects in the community are by themselves committing to carrying out awareness and advocacy at the village levels. “It is at the village levels that the problem



Annie Belle, the Anglophone West Africa Women’s coordinator

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Dialogue Can Solve Religious Differences, religious faithful told in Uganda

CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM relations were put to great test in Uganda following the speech given by the Libyan President Muammar Gaddafi while closing the Afro-Arab Youth festival in Kampala in which he commented about the contents of the Bible.

The Libyan President is reported to have said that the Bible is not genuine since it does not mention Muhammad (the Prophet of Islam). This has since given various reactions mainly from Christians in Uganda with some calling for apologies while others requesting for dialogical process in solving what has been termed as ‘misunderstanding’. In addition, there have been some calls for forgiveness while others have also been urging people to seek for understanding of others’ faiths before making statements which would amount to provocation.

Several comments have been given since then with various journalists and papers calling for dialogue and understanding.

In its editorial on March 25, 2008, the *New Vision* reported that dialogue can solve religious differences and that Uganda has generally been a model of good relations between the two faiths.

“But there are fundamentalists on both sides that threaten to muddle this relationship and theological arguments between two rival positions cannot resolve differences any more than reasoned argument can resolve

...fundamentalists...and theological arguments between two rival positions cannot resolve differences between people with politically opposed views...

differences between people with politically opposed views,” the paper warns. On the origin of the two faiths, the paper advises that the best approach is dialogue.

The paper continues to say that neither Islam nor Christianity is indigenous to Uganda. “The two religions were respectively brought to us by Arab traders and White missionaries and our ancestors embraced one or the other and passed their beliefs on to their children,” the paper said in its editorial.

The Paper continues to counsel adherents of the two faiths to respect each other and engage in inter-faith dialogue instead of engaging in unfruitful polemics against each other.

In warning over exportation of bad relations, the editorial of the paper says, “There is a danger that religious conflicts internal to certain countries may spill over into our country...we do not need to get caught up in these”.

Madagascar:

Women take time off to identify their role in PROCMURA

CHRISTIAN Women who attended the joint gathering between the Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA) and *Communauté d'Eglise en Mission/Community of Churches in Mission* (CEVAA) in February 2008, took some time off and converged to deliberate on issues pertinent to them.

The event that was purposed to galvanise and bring the women's face in the working partnership between the two

working on women empowerment, observed that coming up with structures that encourage women's participation in community's activities should be of paramount importance to any organisation that pursues an inclusive pattern of peace building.

She stated that when she visits and speaks to the members of a community, one thing that comes

their male counterparts," she said.

Still in the area and resultant effects of patriarchal nature of the Malagasy culture, just like many other African societies, the women in the country need to be exposed to other situations that can enable them learn and gain experiences, the meeting resolved. It was also stressed that the identified attitudes is not exclusively facing women just as members of the society but is also entrenched into religious structures.

In relation to the subject matter forming the basis upon which the two organisations – PROCMURA and CEVAA – were meeting, Christian-Muslim relations, the women participants commended that the first step for their effective contribution to the area is comprehensive knowledge of what is going on in the continent. This will give them an upper-hand in confronting issues from the point of knowledge and awareness and hence giving responsible action. They commended PROCMURA for creating space for women to deliberate on how they could be able to contribute to the realisation of harmonious Christian-Muslim relations.

The PROCMURA Women and Education Programme Coordinator, Rev. Angèle Dogbé said that the forum adds up to the agenda of building the network of awareness on matters of Christian-Muslim relations in Africa. She appreciated the fact that the women also acknowledged the idea that in peace building in general and particularly through the process of interfaith engagement, there are issues which are of particular concern to women which should be deliberated on by women. "This forms part and parcel of PROCMURA's Education set-up targeting women," she said. She added that she would advance the idea of



Part of the women who attended PROCMURA-CEVAA Consultation in Madagascar here seen in a group discussion

organisations in Madagascar brought to the fore contextual issues and challenges confronting the women in the Malagasy culture.

Various speakers at the consultative forum acknowledged the need for Christian women in the country to understand their role in the society especially in the area of peace building. They regretted the situation where peace building exercise has been rendered banal.

Ms. Raseta Moana Essa, the first woman governor of Ihorombe, a region in South-Eastern Madagascar who is

out clearly is that women, when in the midst of men, do not feel free. "In this case, I encourage them to meet and deliberate on their issues separately and only

"In this case, I encourage them to meet and deliberate on their issues separately and only when they build their capacities in relation to leadership that they can now be able to meet with their male counterparts"

when they build their capacities in relation to leadership that they can now be able to meet with

Christian and Muslim women separately identifying and discussing respective issues and then come together to further the interactions on the common matters of concern.

During the two days, participants resolved to meet again, this time with others not present in order to deepen their understanding on the identified issues as well and share their own experiences in peace building and interfaith work. They further pledged to work together despite their denominational differences and also meet with the Muslim women to promote joint actions regardless of dissimilarities. "This will be on the ground that as women, we face the same problems and challenges and it is only when we work together as a team that we may be able to overcome," read the statement.

In order to achieve what they proposed to do, they requested PROCMURA and CEVAA and other agencies to support them convene workshops on capacity building and empowerment on issues related to women in Christian-Muslim relations as well as on economical and social problems in order to better their lives and their common environment.



Rev. Mrs. Dogbe, Women's Coordinator

News and Information around PROCMURA's Area Committees

✠ **Ghana - Muslim woman values PROCMURA's agenda on HIV/AIDS for women and calls for collaboration**

While attending the PROCMURA-organised Anglophone West Africa Christian and Muslim women consultation on HIV/AIDS, a Muslim woman talked of her experience in working for a project whose goal is to mobilise women in addressing the problems posed by the pandemic in her country, Ghana.

Ms. Hajia Ashetu Tahiru, from Ghana said that the 'Yin De Naba' project, as it is known is, a project managed and run by the Federation of Muslim Women Association of Ghana (FOMWAG). It was established in 1985 by Muslim women clerics in Ghana and since then, it has undertaken many activities in and around issues of AIDS.

The project whose primary target is People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWAs) acknowledges the importance of working together across the religious divide, she said. "It is on this belief that we find the PROCMURA's approach of bringing Christian and Muslim women around the issue of the pandemic very relevant and seek to participate and contribute to its success," she told the gathering.

Indicating the working areas of 'Yin De Naba' Ms. Ashetu pointed out that in Ghana, according to the Living Standard

Survey of 2002, nine out of ten persons are classified as poor. This makes the fight against the pandemic and other diseases very difficult, she said. Other problems that invite the involvement of organisations such as PROCMURA include cultural practices as related not only to the spread of AIDS but also in the area of denigrating human dignity.

"Women in my country especially in the region where we work, that is Upper East Region, suffer a lot due to cultural practices," she said, while expounding that after undergoing dehumanising experiences during the mourning period, they are forced to undergo some outdated cultural demands.

cont. page 12



The Ghana delegates to the recently held women's regional Women's consultation giving their country's views on HIV/AIDS and women's role in addressing the problems caused by the pandemic



She said that this is an area she would wish to have collaboration with PROCMURA to address.

In appreciating the work by PROCMURA, whose focus she said must be propagated throughout the continent,

“We hope that we shall one day get a partner who would be able to accompany our efforts,” she concluded.

✠ **Tanzania** - *Christian and Muslim leaders agree to tackle grassroots problems as the Area Adviser shares in an international forum on Human Rights*

Christian and Muslim leaders gathered in Kigoma to deliberate on peace and their role in building their congregants' capacities to realise sustainable peaceful living.



Rev. Dr. Samwini, Ghana PROCMURA Area Adviser.

she pointed out that by bringing together Christian and Muslim women and building the feelings of common identity around common issues, PROCMURA is doing what may be called 'breaking the barriers of understanding'. This is an idea we would wish to have in our project, she added.

She equated the approach to the operational mechanism of creating conducive atmosphere for the people living with AIDS to explore their potentials and living normally.

She mentioned challenges to their work as lack of funds both for taking care of the project's needs and even the orphans.

The April 2008 function established that for sustainable peace to be realised, all must be involved. According to the Tanzania PROCMURA Area Adviser, Rev. Canon Thomas Godda, the participants pointed out that regular exchange of ideas and sharing what people do is fundamental in building understanding and hence immensely contributing to the harmonious coexistence.

“It is my feeling that when we engage each other positively during good times, we may be in a good position to have a format of dealing with difficult moments,” Said Godda in his sharing with the Central Office.

He further says that the workshop delved more on what could be done at the grassroots between Christians and Muslims adding that all those present opined that seeking solutions to the grassroots problems is the only way through which PROCMURA could be relevant to the people.

Participants therefore resolved to, among other things, mobilise others in respective communities and use any given forum to spread the need and importance of working together as people of faith. They promised to continue communicating with the Area Adviser on the progress, and if need arises, to seek his help in advancing their cause.

Meanwhile, Rev. Canon Godda attended a two-day workshop on the role of faith-based organisations in the area of Human rights which was held in the Republic of South Africa with a purpose of deliberating on issues of Human



Christian and Muslim leaders who attended Kigoma workshop on peace. Participants, here seen at the end of the event, resolved to work together to ensure that many Christians and Muslims in the country are aware of PROCMURA's principles of peace building

rights under the topical guide of Faith Based Values and Human Rights: A Complementary Partnership?

The workshop was convened by the University of South Pretoria Centre for International Political Studies and financed by the Canadian High Commission in South Africa



Rev. Canon Godda, Tanzania PROCMURA Area Adviser speaking at the Kigoma training session and flanked by a Muslim leader (right) and another participant

PROCMURA's Tanzania Area Adviser, Rev. Canon Thomas Godda, was invited to present a paper under the topic *Challenges confronting Faith Based Communities involved in Reinforcing Human Rights Standards*. In his sharing with the Literature and Communications Officer, Canon Godda says that the April 10 – 11, 2008 workshop was deepening and opened, to the fore, issues which many people have always taken for granted.

In dealing with Human Rights issues, Canon Godda says, the meeting observed that there are a lot of factors to be considered and the concept of universality was greatly challenged. In his paper, Canon Godda challenged participants to re-look over and again on the emerging trend of working around the issue of human rights saying that the way it was defined in the second half of the twentieth century may not be same as today.

He further said that there is a dire need for faith and interfaith based organisations to seek means and ways of exerting pressure for comprehensive observance of human rights



Rev. Moses Khanu, Area Adviser for Sierra Leone

in form of dignity. He further explained that many religions of the world teach that Human Rights violation is evil and evil is against God while what we see in our societies today is completely on the contrary to that.

On this, he posed a question as to what is being done to rectify the situation from the religious or faith side. He observed that the foundation of struggle against any form of oppression and hence violation of human rights must begin at individual levels and all should be involved in building that capacity.

Countries represented were, Botswana, Mozambique, Uganda, Kenya, Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania and the host, South Africa. Christian and Muslim leaders including Bishops and Muftis; religious scholars, Lawyers, Human Rights activists and Academicians were in attendance. The meeting was also attended by representatives of a number of international bodies including the United Nations and diplomatic corps.

✠ **Sierra Leone** - *women in the country call for practical involvement in eradication of HIV/AIDS*

In her brief presentation to the Anglophone West Africa Women consultation on HIV/AIDS, Ms. Hannah Mallah told the gathering that the pandemic is more than a reality in her country. "As in all the countries in Africa, the pandemic has caused devastation in all human sectors namely social, economic and political not forgetting health and spiritual," she said. Under the topic *the fight against HIV/AIDS women's perspective: the Sierra Leone context*, Hannah Mallah noted that the fight against the disease requires a multi-faceted approach and hence the one curved by PROCMURA should be seen as a major one since it calls for joint action between Christians and Muslims.

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Area Committees' news, from page 13

In an analytical fashion, Hannah Mallah indicated that AIDS was first reported in Sierra Leone in 1987 and the



Hannah Mallah (Christian) and Haja Mamunatu Konteh (Muslim) as they present the Sierra Leonean context on Christian-Muslim joint effort in the fight against AIDS to the regional consultation in the Gambia

situation was made worse by the civil war which raged the country resulting into massive displacements, among other catastrophes, and hence making the effort put by various players in the field difficult. “These have posed challenging to women in the country since they have to bear with related problems such as rape, abduction, economic, and cultural discrimination in a patriarchal society,” she said.

There are many agencies, both governmental and non-governmental in the field of fighting against HIV/AIDS. It was understood from the report that the AIDS prevalence in Sierra Leone is appreciably higher in the age group of 15 - 24. On this, Hannah Mallah noted that there is a dire need to have approaches that also target the young people and therefore the PROCMURA youth – Christian and Muslim – training programme carried out in Sierra Leone in 2006 was highly appreciated.

While narrating challenges and negative implications of the pandemic facing women in Sierra Leone, she pointed out that some of the issues that PROCMURA could explore addressing include analysing the policies put by

various agencies and governments in the anti-AIDS drive and ensuring that there are implementable, and if not what could be done.

She concluded by saying that there should be practical follow-up to the previous training programmes especially by addressing the traditional gender and power relations with the religious organisations.

“Religious leaders and people in general must be proactive in combating sexual violence at all levels,” she said.

✠ **Liberia** – the Area Adviser gives good progress in the area of promoting good Christian-Muslim relations in addition to the expansion programme into Guinea

In their annual report, the PROCMURA Liberia Area Committee indicate that much has been done and yet more needed to be accomplished.

The Area Adviser, Rev. St. John York points out that a number of activities have been implemented targeting people of diverse categories, from ex-combatant and people living with HIV/AIDS; to religious

leaders, women and youth.

Speaking of the need for expansion, he reports that the Area Committee, which has been successfully operating as the Inter-religious Affairs Desk of Liberia Council of Churches (LCC), have undertaken the task of ensuring



“This is our situation of and role in the fight against HIV/AIDS in Liberia”, seem to be what the delegates from Liberia, Haja Ella Musa Coleman (Muslim) left, and Ms. Mary Gobson (Christian) right, are telling the Women regional consultation. The consultation was held in the Gambia

that PROCMURA’s work reaches the country of Guinea. “This has involved identifying the churches to collaborate with in Guinea and currently, we have



Rev. St. John York, Liberia Area Adviser. He has initiated programmes including extending the work of PROCMURA into Guinea

the plans of carrying out a three-day workshop on Christian-Muslim relations at the Lutheran Church situated at Zedegure, Guinea,” he said while pointing out that they are still looking for funds for this important extension agenda.

Working with more churches in Liberia has also been of more importance and a priority in the Area Committee’s agenda. On this, Rev. York reports that they have managed to reach more churches who, hitherto the communication, did not know anything about PROCMURA and its work. According to the number of queries we are receiving, says John York, there is a growing indication that more churches would want to have training in the area of Christian-Muslim relations.

He adds that some of the leaders have also expressed their interest in mobilising their congregations in order to have more knowledge so as to circumvent and address issues that bring misunderstanding between Christians and Muslims.

The Area Committee has also initiated a quarterly inter-religious consultation and dialogue which, since its inception in 2007, has realised two events, one in November 2007 and the other in March 2008. These have been described by participants as very effective and calls for more especially in the rural areas have been received. According the Area Committee, other areas of work have included the two workshops for religious leaders one; on HIV/AIDS in December 2007

and the other on Anti-Human trafficking which took place on April 10, 2008. “We have a number of activities lined up, including follow-up of the Youth and Women 2007 HIV/AIDS workshops, for the remaining part of the year and only hope that funds and other human resources would be available for their implementations,” he concluded.

A unique approach in Christian-Muslim relations in Madagascar captures PROCMURA’s attention

 PROJECT whose goal is to work good relations between Christians and Muslims is operational in Madagascar. This came to the realisation of PROCMURA and CEVAA during the joint consultation (reported elsewhere in this newsletter) held in the country in order to pursue means and ways of working together around constructive engagement between Christians and Muslims for peace and peaceful coexistence.

Working as a partnership Ministry between three churches - the Malagasy Lutheran Church, Norwegian Mission and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America - “Project Shalom”, through its focus on Christian-Muslim relations, works around issues of health, literacy and agricultural ministries which it integrates with evangelism.

The project is operating in a predominant Muslim area and judging by the way the locals relate to the idea; it has been of a great benefit to them.

With the primary aim of building bridges between Christians and Muslims in Madagascar and, as such,



A section of participants during plenary session

concentrate on teaching Christians in seminaries, hospitals and congregations about Islam and their Muslim neighbours, there have been an overwhelming increase in the number of people taking part in events organised under the auspice of Project Shalom.

The Project's representatives to the PROCMURA-CEVAA Consultation explained how it was a difficult idea at the beginning given the unpredictable relations between adherents of the two faiths. It was noted that sometimes



The Boat that belongs to and signifies the strength of Project Shalom

what happens between Christians and Muslims out of the country heavily have a bearing on the Project's activities.

It was also said that the approach is that Christians are urged to work together with their Muslim neighbours, nurturing the sense of acceptance and trust and subsequently, avail to them the Christian virtue of love and peace.

While acknowledging the good work being done by the Project, the PROCMURA General Adviser, Dr. Mbillah said that the idea is a real additional value to the agenda being undertaken by PROCMURA. "It is these kinds of activities based at the grassroots and attending to the people's needs that do give the

...these kinds of activities based at the grassroots and attending to the people's needs do give the real meaning of working for peace and become of the practical ways of witnessing to Christ and they must be supported through cooperation...

real meaning of working for peace," he said. He added that PROCMURA would be ready to cooperate and work with Project Shalom members to achieve more in the country and provide lessons to others with such ideas.

On his part, Jean-Claude Basset of CEVAA applauded the approach being used by Project Shalom saying that attending to issues that are of great concern to the members

of the community is one practical way of witnessing to Christ.

On their part, Project Shalom members in their quest to build bridges of understanding between Christians and Muslim, expressed willingness to collaborate with PROCMURA in order to learn from its long time experience in the area of Christian-Muslim relations. Based on this, the PROCMURA leadership at the consultation, Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah and Rev. Mrs. Angèle Dogbe, the General Adviser and Women and Education Programme Coordinator respectively, met the Project Shalom leaders to look into the possibility of collaboration as well as formulate the agenda of partnership between the two organisations.

Out of the meeting, already two leaders of the Malagassy Lutheran Church and Shalom, Dr. Lotera Fabien and Arild Bakke, have visited the PROCMURA Central Office with the purpose of putting in place structures and approach systems for collaboration.

During their visit, they learnt a lot about PROCMURA and indicated that they will look into the possibility of sponsoring and sending three students to St. Paul's University in Kenya and Makane Yesus Seminary in Addis Abeba, Ethiopia to be trained in Islam and Christian-Muslim relations.



Imam Nadison Badrouline (left) and another delegate sharing their ideas on interfaith relations in Madagascar

This will add a great value to our work since after the training; the churches will be approaching issues of Islam and work on Christian-Muslim relations from a point of knowledge, they said.



Church leaders in Nigeria north re-orientate themselves on growing complexity of Christian-Muslim relations

BUILDING capacities of the Church leaders in undertaking responsible and respectful Christian witness especially in a milieu of Christians and Muslims and promoting peace and peaceful coexistence between and amongst the adherents of the two faiths has been and remains a major focus of the Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA). To this extend, in order to ensure that the leadership of the churches in Northern part of Nigeria continue to actively participate in PROCMURA's activities and that they do not shy away from difficult issues in Christian-Muslim relations, the Nigeria North Area Committee under the leadership of the PROCMURA Chairperson, Bishop Joaiah Idowu Fearon, organised a capacity building seminar for Church leaders.

The February 26 – 29, 2008 training which took place in Kafachan, a town in Kaduna State that has, in the past, experienced Christian-Muslim violent conflicts brought together over twenty (20) participants from various church denominations in the area. The seminar, as described by Bishop Fearon, who is also the Chairperson of the Nigeria North PROCMURA Area Committee, was characterised by open and frank interchanges which is typical of PROCMURA's sessions.

The learning programme basically focused on the theological justification for Christians to constructively relate with Muslims. "The discussions were carried out in an aura of sobriety and we are very glad that even when sensitive and complex issues regarding the Christian and Muslim faiths cropped up, they were dealt with within the framework of knowledge and understanding," said Bishop Fearon.

On matters of evangelism and constructive relations with Muslims, the PROCMURA General Adviser, who facilitated the whole session, said that the two, if well undertaken, should complement each other and not found to be in contradiction since in our relationship with the Muslims, we do not require them (Muslims) to put aside their mandate to propagate Islam in order to relate.

In addition to the PROCMURA Chairperson and General Adviser, the Rev. Japheth Aeneas and Bishop Mutum,



Church leaders who attended the Kafachan re-orientation training on Islam and Christian-Muslim relations here seen with the PROCMURA General Adviser (seated,

all of whom are scholars in Islam and Christian-Muslim relations, added value to the discussions as they made

...the Area Committee sponsored the entire seminar, 'a venture which should be emulated by other Area Committees'...

contributions to the intricate issues on interfaith relations.

At the close of the training, participants arrived at various resolutions one of which was the determination of the leadership of the Churches in the area to the reorganisation of the Area Committee in order to bring in more life to its programme implementation process.

An important area worth mentioning is that the Area Committee sponsored the entire seminar. "We are grateful for such a move and hope that other Area Committees will emulate that example," said the General Adviser.



PROCMURA Chairperson, Bishop Fearon. He also chairs PROCMURA Nigeria North Area Committee.



East Africa Religious leaders' gathering to deliberate on regional peace issues

CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM leaders from Eastern and Central African countries will be gathering to talk and plan their involvement in regional peace issues in September 2008 in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania.

merely within the region but also beyond since it has been a general experience that what happens outside the region always have bearing in the local dynamics.

A total of six countries will participate with mobilisation and awareness creation done through respective Area Committees. The countries are Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania.

The main purpose of this PROCMURA inaugural regional Christian-Muslim leaders' conference would be to open up the door to the regional Islamic and Christian top echelons to be able to influence peace building processes at the community levels and also enable them to embrace each other through

the spirit of acceptance. PROCMURA will also have an opportunity to share with them its concept of Christian-Muslim relations (the Middle Way Approach) and seek their



Outcome of negative Christian-Muslim confrontations in the continent. The causes of such confrontations and their solutions would be top priority of the Eastern Africa PROCMURA regional Christian and Muslim leaders' conference in Tanzania

Being convened by PROCMURA Central Office, the coming together of over 50 leaders is expected to shed light into the challenges of peace-making and conflict resolution (especially through Christian-Muslim relations approach) not

Muslim leaders adopt the use of interfaith dialogue to solve world problems and promote development and Peace

In what they called 'The Dakar Declaration', the leaders of Muslim Nations who attended the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in Dakar, Senegal, committed themselves to go extra mile to ensure that they work for peace, security and development in the world. They pointed out that they will use all positive means including furthering interfaith dialogue to achieve development of member nations.

While issuing the statement at the end of the Summit which took place on March 13 – 14, 2008, in Dakar, Senegal, the leaders supported dialogue of civilisations and recommended a preparatory phase with the holding of a

major international meeting on the Islam-Christian dialogue involving governments.

Sources from *Catholic Information Service for Africa (CISA*

...the leaders, from their statement, pledged to work harder to combat Islamophobia, to make sure that Islam's true image is better projected the world over...

- March 19, 2008) say that the leaders, from their statement, pledged to work harder to combat Islamophobia, to make sure that Islam's true image is better

projected the world over. This, they said, would be achieved based on the outlines of the ten-year OIC action plan. The plan was adopted in 2005 in Mecca.

The leaders also agreed to 'slam all forms and demonstrations of extremism and dogmatism, incompatible with Islam which is a religion of moderation and peaceful coexistence', the Declaration said.

The declaration reiterated disapproval of terrorism, calling it a world phenomenon not related to any religion, race, colour or country.





Bishop Alex Malasusa, Tanzania PROCMURA Area Committee Chairperson, "We are more than glad to host the inaugural Christian-Muslim leaders' conference".

participation in its enhancement as a tool to sustaining peaceful relations.

...the region is yearning for social-economic and political transformation which to the truest sense could be realised through practical interfaith relations...

Lined up for the conference would be thematic paper presentations, countries' situational analysis and strategic work plan among other activities.

The Conference has been described by the PROCMURA General Adviser, Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah as the starting point of practical involvement of the leadership of the two religions in bringing change 'through faith actions' in the region.

"The region is yearning for social-economic and political transformation which to the truest sense could be realised through practical interfaith relations," he told the Literature and Communications Officer.



PROCMURA Area Adviser to serve the churches in Egypt

THE Area Adviser for PROCMURA in Côte d'Ivoire, the Rev. Daniel Konan has been appointed to be the Pastor in charge of the Evangelical community in Cairo and the Protestant community of Alexandria.

The Rev. Konan who studied theology in the Protestant Faculty of Yaounde, Cameroon, was sent by PROCMURA to study Islam and Christian-Muslim relations at Dar Comboni Arabic Studies Institute in Cairo, Egypt for two years (2003 – 2005) and was subsequently appointed PROCMURA Area Adviser for Côte d'Ivoire.

PROCMURA's partners - Action Chrétien en Orient (ACO)-France and the Action Chrétien en Orient (ACO)-Swiss Commission of DM-échange et mission - had advertised the vacant position in Cairo and Rev. Konan applied and was subsequently selected as the most suitable candidate for the position.

We recognise that his move to Cairo will leave Côte d'Ivoire without an Area Adviser but are encouraged by at least two

things, one, that his new position provides him with an opportunity to continue to apply his knowledge of building bridges of understanding between Christians and Muslims in the Egyptian environment, and two, that he will be an asset to PROCMURA's collaborative efforts with Coptic Evangelical

Organization for Social Services (CEOSS) and the Anglican Communion in Cairo.

Reflecting on his appointment, Rev. Konan assured PROCMURA that he will use the opportunity to deepen his knowledge on Islam and in spoken Arabic. He also expressed his commitment to continue to be in contact with PROCMURA and hopes that he could be of service to PROCMURA once he returned.

On his appointment itself, he acknowledged that his studies at Dar Comboni Arabic Studies Institute and

service as Area Adviser contributed immensely to his being selected to serve in Egypt.



Rev. Daniel Konan (right) receives a book from PROCMURA Chairperson, Bishop Fearon. Looking on is Joy Wandabwa PROCMURA Finance Officer. This was during West Africa Area Advisers' consultation



PROCMURA makes further inroads into South Africa

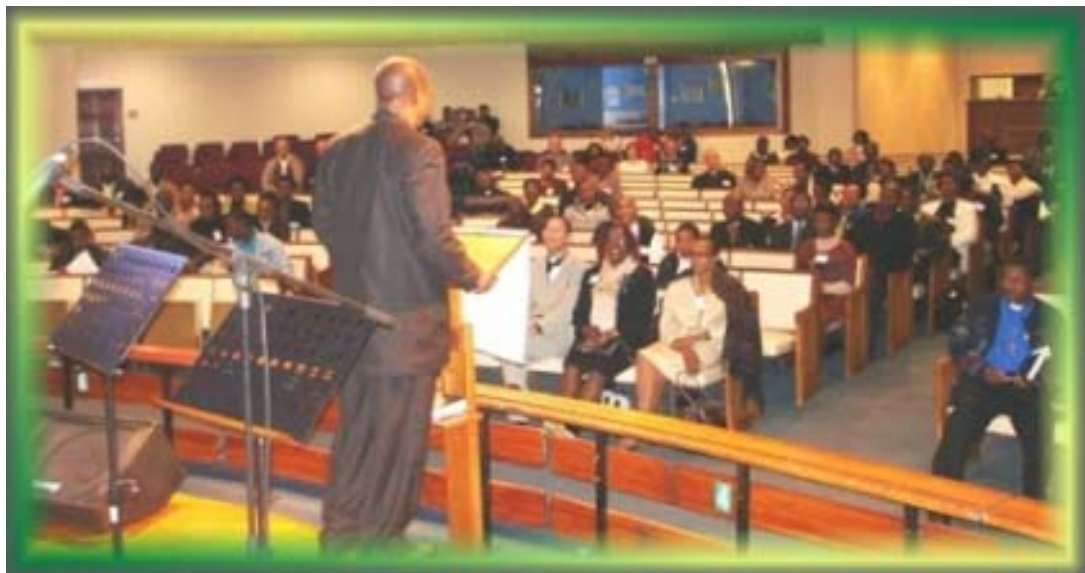
AS part of its determination to expand its activities into Southern Africa, a move that started four years ago, PROCMURA was well introduced to Church leaders and theological students as well as lecturers in South Africa in May 2008.

The General Adviser's visit to South Africa was informed by the newly found relationship between PROCMURA and All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) whereby the AACC ensures that visitors and familiarisation tours also visits PROCMURA.

It was in one of those visits that a delegation of Methodist Bishops from Southern Africa were brought to PROCMURA Central Office by AACC General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Mvume Dandala, to familiarise themselves with what PROCMURA is and what it stands for. The Bishops, having heard about PROCMURA's ideals and goals, recognised the importance of PROCMURA for the life and ministry of the churches in Africa, resolved that the organisation and what it stands for has to be introduced to the churches in Southern Africa. As a result of this resolve,

the General Adviser was invited to a weeklong session from 18th to 25th May 2008.

While addressing the two synods, the Highveld and Swaziland District Synod at the Benoni Methodist Church



Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah, standing with his back to the camera, presenting PROCMURA to the plenary during the South Africa visit in which he promoted the vision and mission of the organisation amongst the Church theological institutions leaders

in Johannesburg; and the Limpopo District Synod, the General Adviser expounded, in details, PROCMURA's principles and core areas of work in the field of Christian-Muslim relation in Africa. Church leaders attending the two synods brought to the fore questions on the complexity of Christian-Muslim relations in Africa. According to the General Adviser, 'the interactions were very lively and well structured to avoid digression into unrelated areas'. He reiterated the need for the Church leadership in Southern Africa to embark on the process of enlightening the congregations on the emerging challenges in the areas of Christian faith especially in regard to interfaith relations.

Regarding lectures to the students at the theological institutions including John Wesley College at Mokitimi, the General Adviser spoke of the PROCMURA's Middle Way theology. He termed this approach 'imperative for Christians to witness to their faith amidst the Muslim presence and yet at the same time foster good relations with Muslims for peace and peaceful coexistence'. The lectures were to stimulate and create interest of the students to the area of



Dr. Mbillah sharing views with some of the Church leaders at the conference

PROCMURA into South Africa, from page 20

Christian-Muslim relations work. In this same framework of engaging theological institutions and their leadership, Dr. Mbilla also visited lecturers in Islam in the Faculty of

PROCMURA's Middle Way theology. This approach is 'imperative for Christians to witness to their faith amidst the Muslim presence and yet at the same time foster good relations with Muslims for peace and peaceful coexistence'

theology at the University of Pretoria where under the guidance of one Professor Pie Meiring, he met virtually all the lecturers of the faculty as a group to share views on Christian-Muslim relations.

"This visit gave me an opportunity to discuss the importance of theological institutions and faculties of theology in the area of Islam and Christian-Muslim relations

and encourage them to take such ventures seriously and evolve programmes for it to be taught," he said. The lecturers and members of the faculty, on their part, indicated that academic and professional theologians cannot ignore the issue of interfaith theology since it has been existential on the life of the churches and of society.

The visit, which was arranged by Rev. Dr. Brian C. Jennings, Bishop of Highveld and Swaziland, and subsequent interactions with the leadership of the churches in Southern Africa including discussions with Bishops from Swaziland, Botswana, Lesotho and Zimbabwe, elevated PROCMURA's profile and agenda of building a network within the region since the organisation is now in a position to understand better, what Christian and Muslim practical relations are in that part of the continent.

It will be recalled that about four years ago, PROCMURA in conjunction with Community of Churches in Mission (CEVAA) held a seminar in Lesotho as part of the PROCMURA expansion. 

Nigeria:

"Let us work together irrespective of our religious differences," says the President as he promises to set up a joint religious committee

THE President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Umaru Musa Yar'adua has called on all Nigerians to learn to live and work together in peace their religious differences notwithstanding.

He made this appeal immediately after being sworn in and promised to set up a Joint Religious Committee to serve as a forum for peace in the country.

According to the *Nigeria First*, President Yar'adua, a Muslim, made the pledge of setting the Committee at a session with the Council of Ulama (a



President Umaru Musa Yar'adua

"I am President today not because I am better or wiser than anybody but rather because that is the will of God...thus I consider every Nigerian who has a meaningful contribution on the way forward for our nation as my adviser"

"I am President today not because I am better or wiser than anybody but rather because that is the will of God. That imposes on me enormous responsibility. And for that, I consider every Nigerian who has a meaningful contribution on the way forward for our nation as my adviser," he said. 

delegation of Islamic scholars) while saying that he would regard every Nigerian, regardless of his or her religion, as his adviser.

West Africa women consultation, from page 9

is really found and I would like to convey the message to the PROCMURA Central Office that the women are ready and only need their support," she emphasised.

After intensive and interactive deliberations, the four-day session developed diverse resolutions which they committed themselves to undertake. These included not losing sight on 'mass campaign' among women of faith and to create awareness on the factors behind the spread of the pandemic.

Other actions agreed on are continued building of understanding of God and His commandments through reading and sharing the Scriptures (the Bible and the Qur'ân) and working in solidarity with each other despite religious and ethnical differences.

The participants, in their evaluation, were satisfied with the approach and promised to communicate on the progress of the work at country levels.

Article submitted by Rev. Mrs. Angèle Dogbé, Women and Education Programme Coordinator



Upcoming events

a. Church leaders to strengthen their role in Christian-Muslim relations

Plans to have an orientation session in Burkina Faso as those in Madagascar seeks to reflect on the formation of an Area Committee

● In enhancing the efforts by the Church leaders in PROCMURA's work in Burkina Faso, the Area Committee is



Pastor Flavien Tapsoba, Burkina Faso PROCMURA Area Adviser

planning an orientation workshop in October 2008. This, according to the Area Committee under the leadership of Rev. Flavien Tapsoba, will give a rare opportunity for the leaders to share their experiences in the area of Christian-Muslim relations and draw up a joint work plan to widen the scope of PROCMURA's principles.

● In Madagascar, Church leaders will, in the month of November 2008, gather to define their role in the enhancement of building harmonious relations between Christians and Muslims in that country. This comes in the hot heels of the seminar held jointly by the traditional partners, Programme for Christian-Muslim (PROCMURA) and *Communauté d'Eglise en Mission/Community of Churches in Mission*

(CEVAA) in Madagascar in February 6 – 15, 2008. Church leadership in that Island country, after resolving, in that meeting, to work together views the occasion as one that would propel them into developing a structure that would ultimately lead to a formation of an Area Committee on Christian-Muslim relations.

b. Women programme of PROCMURA lists a number of activities to advance women's role in Christian-Muslim relations

● Tanzania: Christian Women in Tanzania will be coming together with a purpose of deliberating on issues that relate to their cause in the involvement in Christian-Muslim relations agenda. The workshop, scheduled for August 2008 in the country's capital city of Dar-es-Salaam, is expected to look into a number of issues including the role of women in Christian-Muslim relations, women and leadership, and the possibility of convening a joint Christian-Muslim women session to focus on issues of common concerns such as HIV/AIDS in the society.



Veronica Mtaita, Tanzania Women's Programme and a member of PROCMURA Executive Committee

● Ghana: As part of PROCMURA's core business, a workshop will be held for Christian women leaders in September 4 – 6, 2008. With the focus on issues of common concerns between Christians and Muslims in the country, the workshop will have an agenda to interpret PROCMURA's principles to the local context. In this regard, it will also look into and actualise the strengthening leadership in articulating the task of carrying the organisational work to the grassroots levels. Participants will be drawn from all the churches around the country.



Madam Hukporti Léocadie, PROCMURA Togo Women's Programme Coordinator and a member of PROCMURA Executive Committee

● Togo and the Republic of Benin is set to convene respective Christian-Muslim women's workshops on HIV/AIDS. Within the context of making follow-ups to the Francophone West Africa PROCMURA regional consultation on HIV/AIDS that was held sometimes back, joint workshops for

Christians and Muslim women are planned to take place in Lome, Togo and the Republic of Benin in Porto-Novo. The Togo national event will take place in September 4 – 6, 2008 while the one for Republic of Benin is expected to come on in August 18 – 19, 2008.



Titus Kazungu, PROCURA Area Adviser for Kenya

c. PROCURA Youth programme to train Christian youth in complex issues of Christian-Muslim relations in Côte d'Ivoire and Kenya

● Events expected to inject energy and enthusiasm among the Christian young people as they engage in addressing the challenges that encounter them in the society are planned to take place in Côte d'Ivoire and Kenya. The two training workshops are seen as a confirmation to PROCURA's operating principle that young people stand in a very strong position to the achievement of

the organisational ideals. This is based on the argument that whenever there is a misunderstanding in the society, young people are the ones who are usually used and misused to cause havoc. This is the direction we would wish to change and we are convinced that the only way is to harmonise their understanding and widen their scope of interpreting issues hence responding responsibly. "It is our view that the training workshops will endeavour to look at the situations of both countries, all of which have had inter-communal cum political strife – Cote d'Ivoire still lingering on the consequences of civil war while Kenya trying to put things in order after the recent violence that was experienced as a result of disputed presidential elections," says Okok-Obuoga, PROCURA Literature and Communications Officer who is also in charge of the youth programme. The workshops, expected to take place in November 2008, will also look at means of developing concrete joint actions as follow-ups to the previous programmes which focused on specific matters such as the role of Christian and Muslim youths in the fight against HIV and AIDS

d. PROCURA and the Anglican Communion of North Africa in joint collaboration

● Furthering the principle of sharing and learning from one another, PROCURA and the Anglican Communion of North Africa are planning to have a joint session in which they will bring together



AACC General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Mvume Dandala, "there is a dire need for mutual ecumenical cooperation in Africa for effective Christian Ministry in our motherland"

Christian and Muslim leaders to Cairo, Egypt sometimes in October 2008. The event will focus on matters of intercultural dialogue and is expected to delve on issues and facets that could see members of both faiths identify issues that either jeopardise their relations or can stimulate understanding and peaceful living.

e. PROCURA to be presented at the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) ninth General Assembly

One of the major subjects that is expected to form part of the AACC's General Assembly agenda is the interfaith relations in general and Christian-Muslim relations in Africa in particular. In order to address this, the leadership of the AACC has since decided to let PROCURA work among its member churches on all matters that relate to interfaith dialogue. As a result of this understanding, the planning committee of the AACC's ninth General Assembly to be held in Maputo, Mozambique in the month of December

2008 have slotted a full session for the presentation of PROCURA to the leadership of the churches so as to enable them get to understand in detail what PROCURA is and its principles. It is also expected that the PROCURA General Adviser and some Central Office staff who will attend the Assembly would be instrumental in contributing to other sessions. It is expected that a session will be dedicated to the presentation of PROCURA and its working principles and approach to the Church leaders and all those who will be attending the Assembly with a full anticipation of their increased involvement in the area of promoting harmonious Christian-Muslim relations as they carry their mandate of Christian witness.

PROCMURA loses two of its influential persons

Rev. O. Tetteh: The Rev. Daniel Okai Tetteh, one time chairperson of PROCMURA passed away on February 20, 2008 in Accra, Ghana. The Rev. Tetteh who was chairperson of PROCMURA from 1993-2000 is credited with ushering in PROCMURA from a European and North American led organisation to an African led organisation.

In his tribute to Rev. Tetteh, the moderator of the European Liaison Committee (ELC) of PROCMURA, Professor Klaus Hock praised him for his humility, intelligence, authority, straightforwardness and wisdom. He said that Rev. Tetteh will be remembered as the chairman of PROCMURA who successfully directed the most decisive transformation of PROCMURA since its inception, namely the Africanisation of its leadership through the installation of an African General Adviser.

On his part, the General Adviser on behalf of the entire PROCMURA family described Rev. Tetteh as 'a man who demonstrated excellent qualities of diplomacy, firmness, integrity and selflessness. He was a man of his word who led by example, always conscious of what to say, when to say it, how to say it or even to say nothing at all. When he least spoke, one could still understand the message he was putting across'

Many tributes from PROCMURA's constituencies in Africa, Europe and North America were received by the central office of PROCMURA and the family of Rev. Tetteh.

PROCMURA was represented at the funeral service which took place on April 4 by the Chairperson of PROCMURA, Bishop Josiah Idowu Fearon, the Regional Coordinator for francophone West Africa, Rev. Dr. Désiré Drake and the General adviser, Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah. The Ghana Area Committee delegation was lead by the Area adviser, Rev. Dr. Nathan Samwini; Major Adu-Manu, incoming Chairperson; Venerable Adjaye, outgoing chairperson; and Kate Agbenyikey secretary to the Area Committee.

We are saddened that our father, leader, inspirer and veteran of PROCMURA has left us, but look back with gladness that he did not leave PROCMURA orphaned but consolidated its foundation for those after him to build on.

Prof. David Kerr: Professor Kerr, a household name in Christian-Muslim relations passed away on April 13, 2008. As the founder of the famous Centre for the study of Islam and Christian-Muslim relations in Selly Oak, Birmingham in the United Kingdom, many of PROCMURA Area Advisers including the General Adviser studied under him. When he moved on to be a professor of Islam and Christian-Muslim relations in Hartford Connecticut as a successor of the first General Adviser of PROCMURA, Prof. Wim Bijlefeld, he continued to receive PROCMURA students for training. In fact, the current Chairperson of PROCMURA, Bishop Josiah Fearon, studied under him in Hartford.



The late Rev. D. O. Tetteh

Professor Kerr's attachment to PROCMURA, apart from having helped to train many of its field workers, also stems from his continuous support of the programme to the extent that when PROCMURA sought to work on its archives, he came over to Nairobi to spend valuable time sorting out the archives and documenting them for easy reference.

Prof. Kerr will be remembered for his great humility and commitment to genuine Christian encounter with Muslims. He may have passed on, but his legacy lives on as many of us in PROCMURA have little bits of him in our academic journeys and in our quest to work towards building bridges of understanding between Christians and Muslims.

PROCMURA continues to receive messages of condolences to the family from all its constituencies in Africa

May the souls of the faithful departed rest in perfect peace



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Prof. Kerr displaying a gift from the Office during the farewell done on his honour by the Central Office staff